

## Lexical variation in syntactic profiles: new insights from World Englishes

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Situated within the framework of Construction Grammar, this study explores how a usage-based construction grammar approach can explain patterns of lexical variation among distributions of syntactic alternates across varieties of English. For this purpose, I analyze the lexical items that fill the syntactic slots in the well-known dative alternation (*give Mary the book* vs. *give the book to Mary*) across speakers of regionally diverse varieties of English.

Abundant research has shown that the choice between syntactic variants is modulated not only by language-internal constraints (e.g. end-weight), but also by variant-specific lexical biases (Bybee & Hopper 2001: 2). Extending previous work (e.g. Bybee & Thompson 1997), I show how the development of entrenched lexical biases with particular syntactic variants among different language varieties can lead to the emergence of variation in the factors governing choice among more abstract constructional schemas, e.g. ditransitive vs. prepositional datives. 8,549 interchangeable dative tokens were extracted from 9 varieties within the International Corpus of English. Collostructional analyses (Gries & Stefanowitsch 2004) reveal that in non-native varieties of English, the choice of syntactic variant is lexically more restricted than in native varieties. Results also indicate that speakers' representations of alternations in non-native varieties are more substantive, i.e. concrete, and less schematic, i.e. abstract, than in native varieties. I argue this provides evidence for the cognitive reality of (micro-) constructions and their role in usage-based models of syntax (see Diessel to appear).

## References

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